THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

SAFARI

AN AFRICAN ART ADVENTURE

Welcome to the African Gallery. Discover the art of a magical place, where MAN, MYTHS, MASKS, and MUSIC are as diverse as the African landscape. Travel through the African gallery to have a glimpse of life within communities of Fon, Yoruba, Asante, and other peoples. Each object on your art Safari is like an exotic time capsule with an age-old African story to tell.

HEADDRESS
KUBA PEOPLE, ZAIRE

RAFFIA, WOOD, BEADS, SHELLS, LEOPARD SKIN, PALM FIBERS, 1875–1900.

ACTIVITY 1

HEADDRESS (GELEDE)

YORUBA PEOPLE, NIGERIA
WOOD, PIGMENT, 1950S

This headdress was worn in ceremonies of the Gelede Society, which worked to protect the Yoruba people from evil. It includes some of the architectural elements found in the Yoruba region of Nigeria. Notice the carved wood posts that support a roof made of palm leaf fiber.

For a glimpse at a Yoruba workshop, look carefully at the figures seated on the crown of the headdress. They are blacksmiths tending their forge, where iron is heated and hammered into useful or ritual objects. What kind of iron objects have you seen?

The blacksmith was a feared and respected member of the Yoruba community because he knew the secrets of transforming metal with fire.

Can you find a brilliant blue color on the face of the headdress? This blue dye, which Yoruba people obtained through trade with Europeans, was made by French people for dyeing shirts.

At home, complete this headdress by drawing a different kind of workshop or gathering.

ACTIVITY 2

HEAD OF A QUEEN MOTHER

EDO PEOPLE,
BENIN CITY, NIGERIA
BRASS, 1800–1900

Among outstanding African objects are the brass castings of the Edo people of Benin, who are often referred to as Benin people. Like those made in centuries before it, this HEAD OF A QUEEN MOTHER has special characteristics.

Look carefully at the brass head and and try to find the following characteristics:

- Broad flat nose and almond shaped eyes that are heavily outlined.
- Scarification marks, a symbol of authority, wealth, and importance, on the forehead and around the eyes.
- A tall, patterned collar of coral beads.
- A hairnet covering over a conical hairdo.
- A hole in the top of the head in which an elephant tusk, a traditional symbol of long life and purity, was once inserted.

ACTIVITY 3

EQUESTRIAN FIGURE

FON PEOPLE,
REPUBLIC OF BENIN
WOOD, 1940S

To the Fon people, who are mostly farmers, horses and cattle are of great importance to the survival of their community. Only royalty could use a horse for transportation. The Fon people believed that a rider on horseback should seem as powerful as his horse.

This sculpture, carved from a single block of wood, probably once supported a bowl, which its wealthy owner used to hold gifts for visitors.

What gifts would your friends like to receive?

At home, draw your gifts within the bowl in this picture.

ACTIVITY 4

FEMALE FIGURE (AKUABA)

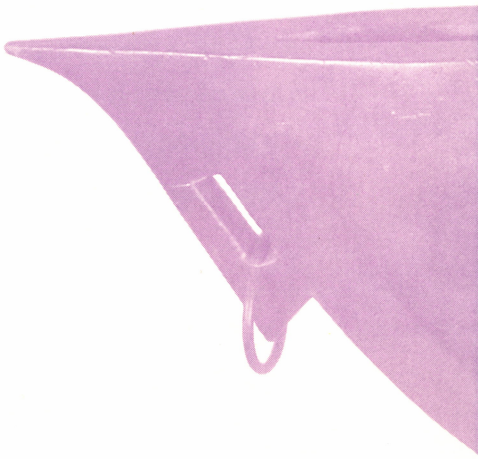
**ASANTE PEOPLE,
GHANA
WOOD AND BEADS,
ABOUT 1900**

WHO IS AKUA?

Read the label in the exhibition case that describes this small wood statue of a FEMALE FIGURE to learn the story of AKUA.

Do you know what an heirloom is? It is a valued possession passed down in a family from generation to generation. To an Asante woman, carrying an akuaba that belonged to her grandmother would be a joy and a privilege.

At home, draw items belonging to your family that might become heirlooms.



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ACTIVITY 5

SLIT GONG

**MANGBETU PEOPLE,
ZAIRE
WOOD WITH METAL RINGS,
1900–1923**

TOUCH THE BUTTON on the SLIT GONG PEDESTAL and listen to the music of the Mangbetu people.

Music, mostly from drums, serves many purposes for the peoples of Africa.

Music is communication between distant locations.
What communication sounds do you hear while riding in a car, at school, and at home?

Music is an important part of rituals and ceremonies.
What musical instruments are played at weddings in Toledo?

Music is accompaniment for dancers.
What kind of music makes you feel like dancing?

Music is inspiration for workers.
What music inspires you to clean your room?

Now take a moment to notice how African artists used geometric patterns to decorate objects in the gallery.

At home, draw a geometric pattern of your own design on the slit gong to the left.

Your safari now leaves the gallery where man, myths, masks, and music tell the story of a magical place.

On your way home, look for geometric patterns in buildings, sidewalks, and the clothes people are wearing.